

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A customer solicitation support system, comprising:
 - a portable apparatus which is carried by a customer;
 - a plurality of client computers which are installed in shops; and
 - a server which exchanges information among the plurality of client computers,
wherein the portable apparatus comprises:
 - a first display device which displays shop information indicating shops having stock of a product desired by the customer; and
 - a first communication device which wirelessly communicates with the client computers to send customer information indicating the customer carrying the portable apparatus and receive the shop information displayed on the first display device from one of the client computers closest to the customer;
 - wherein each of the client computers comprises:
 - a second communication device which wirelessly communicates with the first communication device of the portable apparatus to receive the customer information from the first communication device and send the shop information to the first communication device; and
 - a third communication device which sends the customer information received by the second communication device to the server and receives the shop information sent by the second communication device from the server; and
 - wherein the server comprises:
 - a fourth communication device which receives the customer information from the portable apparatus via the client computers wirelessly communicating with the portable apparatus and sends the shop information which the first display device of the portable apparatus is caused to display;
 - a customer information database which manages desired product information in association with customer information of each customer;
 - a stock information database which manages stocked product information indicating stocked products in association with shop information of each shop;
 - an extraction device which, upon receiving the customer information via the fourth communication device, extracts the desired product information associated with the

customer information from the customer information database based upon the received customer information; and

a control device which compares the desired product information extracted by the extraction device and the stocked product information registered in the stock information database, retrieves stocked product information coinciding with the desired product information, and outputs the shop information associated with the retrieved stocked price information to the fourth communication device.

2. The customer solicitation support system as defined in claim 1, further comprising:
a customer information input apparatus which comprises:

an input device which inputs customer information indicating the customer carrying the portable apparatus together with the desired product information associated with the product desired by the customer; and

a fifth communication device which communicates with the fourth communication device of the server and sends the desired product information and the customer information inputted by the input device to the server.

3. The customer solicitation support system as defined in claim 2, wherein the input device is capable of inputting a face image of the customer together with the desired product information and the customer information.

4. The customer solicitation support system as defined in claim 3, wherein:
each of the client computers comprises a second display device which displays the face image of the customer and desired product information; and
the fourth communication device sends the face image of the customer and the desired product information which the second display device is caused to display.

5. The customer solicitation support system as defined in claim 1, wherein:
the portable apparatus comprises an input device which inputs the desired product information associated with the product desired by the customer; and
the first communication device sends the desired product information together with the customer information.

6. The customer solicitation support system as defined in claim 5, wherein the input device of the portable apparatus is capable of inputting a face image of the customer together with the desired product information and the customer information.
7. The customer solicitation support system as defined in claim 6, wherein:
 - each of the client computers comprises a second display device which displays the face image of the customer and desired product information; and
 - the fourth communication device sends the face image of the customer and the desired product information which the second display device is caused to display.
8. The customer solicitation support system as defined in claim 1, wherein the shop information includes location information of the shops.
9. The customer solicitation support system as defined in claim 8, wherein:
 - the server comprises a customer existing location detection device which detects an existing location of the customer; and
 - the control device outputs the shop information of the shop close to the existing location of the customer, which is detected by the customer existing location detection device, preferentially to the fourth communication device among the shop information associated with the retrieved stocked product information.
10. The customer solicitation support system as defined in claim 9, wherein:
 - each of the first communication device of the portable apparatus and the second communication device of the client computers is a short-range wireless communication device which performs wireless communication only in a predetermined communication area; and
 - the customer existing location detection device of the server detects the customer existing location based upon an installation location of the client computer which has sent the customer information to the server.
11. The customer solicitation support system as defined in claim 10, wherein each of the first communication device of the portable device and the second communication device of the

client computers is a short-range wireless communication device of the Bluetooth standard.

12. The customer solicitation support system as defined in claim 1, wherein:
 - the stocked product information managed by the stock information database includes prices of the stocked products; and
 - the control device outputs the shop information of the shop, which sets low prices to the stocked products, preferentially to the fourth communication device among the shop information associated with the retrieved stocked price information.
13. The customer solicitation support system as defined in claim 1, wherein:
 - each of the client computers comprises an input device which inputs stocked product information;
 - each of the client computers sends the shop information to the server together with the stocked product information via the third communication device; and
 - the server comprises a database management device which, upon receiving the stocked product information and the shop information via the fourth communication device, registers the stocked product information in the stock information database in association with the shop information.
14. The customer solicitation support system as defined in claim 1, wherein:
 - each of the client computers comprises an input device which inputs product purchase information indicating that the customer has purchased the desired product;
 - each of the client computers sends the customer information to the server together with the product purchase information inputted by the input device via the third communication device; and
 - the server comprises a database management device which, upon receiving the product purchase information and the customer information inputted by the input device, deletes the desired product information, which is registered in association with the customer information, from the customer information database together with the received customer information.
15. The customer solicitation support system as defined in claim 1, wherein the server

comprises a database management device which manages terms of validity for the desired product information registered in the customer information database and the stocked product information registered in the stock information database, respectively, and deletes the desired product information and the stock product information, the terms of validity of which have expired, from the customer information database and the stock information database.

16. The customer solicitation support system as defined in claim 1, wherein:
 - each of the first communication device of the portable apparatus and the second communication device of the client computers is a short-range wireless communication device which performs wireless communication only in a predetermined communication area;
 - each of the client computers sends information, which indicates whether or not the each of the client computer is wirelessly connected to the portable apparatus, to the server via the third communication device; and
 - the server comprises a database management device which, upon receiving information, which indicates that the portable apparatus is not wirelessly connected to the each of the client computers, via the fourth communication device, deletes the customer information corresponding to the portable apparatus from the customer information database.
17. An information provision server which exchanges information with a plurality of client computers installed in shops, comprising:
 - a communication device which receives customer information indicating a customer carrying a portable apparatus from a client computer wirelessly communicating with the portable apparatus of the customer and sends shop information for causing a display device of the portable apparatus to display shop information relating to a shop holding stock of a product desired by the customer;
 - a customer information database which manages desired product information relating to the product desired by the customer in association with the customer information received by the communication device;
 - a stock information database which manages stocked product information of stocked products of the shops as stock information in association with the shop information; and
 - a control device which compares the desired product information included in the customer information managed by the customer information database and the stocked product

information included in the stock information managed by the stock information database, retrieves the stock information having the stocked product information coinciding with the desired product information, and outputs the shop information included in the retrieved stocked product information to the communication device.